



What does Ivanka Trump know about Jan. 6? Congress is asking

By FARNOUSH AMIRI

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump was in the Oval Office with his daughter Ivanka and Vice President Mike Pence's national security adviser on the morning of Jan. 6, 2021, when he made yet another push to pressure Pence. Trump again told Pence that he had a duty to reject Electoral College votes that would formalize Democrat Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election, something the vice president had no authority to do in his ceremonial role in Congress that day.

"You don't have the courage to make a hard decision," Trump told Pence, according to congressional testimony. Even after Trump called him a "wimp,"

Pence rebuffed the demand, issuing a lengthy statement afterward laying out his conclusion that he had no power to influence the outcome.

When the call ended, Ivanka Trump turned to retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg and said, "Mike Pence is a good man."

"Yes, he is," Kellogg replied. Now the House committee investigating the riot wants to know what else Ivanka Trump heard and saw that day as they try to stitch together the narrative of the riots and the former president's role in instigating them. There was a frantic effort by many of Trump's top supporters to persuade him to intervene, and some directly sought to use his daughter as their conduit.

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President Donald Trump watches as daughter Ivanka Trump speaks at a campaign event at the Kenosha Regional Airport, Nov. 2, 2020, in Kenosha, Wis.

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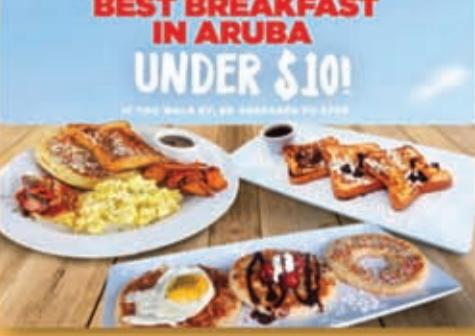
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The White House in the background, President Donald Trump speaks at a rally in Washington, Jan. 6, 2021.

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Continued from Front

A committee aide said they are hopeful that she will soon commit to a time to meet.

Throughout her time in the White House, Ivanka Trump was known as a rare voice who could get through to her father and talk him out of bad decisions, though her success was mixed. The former first daughter has kept an extraordinary low profile since her father left office and has distanced herself from him and politics since moving to Florida.

But her proximity to him on Jan. 6 could provide the committee with direct access to what Trump was doing during those crucial three hours when his supporters violently stormed Capitol.

"Ivanka Trump has details about what occurred in the lead-up to and on Jan. 6 and about the former president's state of mind as events unfolded," Rep. Stephanie Murphy, D-Fla., a member of the panel, told The Associated Press. It is highly unusual for congressional investigators to target a family member of a president, but as a senior adviser to her father, she also had a perch close to power. Kellogg disclosed the exchange with the committee, but so far Ivanka Trump, who famously guards her image and public profile, has not talked to the panel.

The answers could have significant repercussions not only for Donald

Trump, who is eyeing a political comeback in 2024, but for those in the Republican Party who have downplayed his role in the insurrection.

A spokeswoman for Ivanka Trump did not respond to multiple requests for comment. But in a statement issued in late January, a representative for her noted that Ivanka Trump did not speak at the rally near the White House where the then-president urged his supporters to "fight like hell" as Congress convened to certify the 2020 election results, and said she still believed that "any security breach or disrespect to our law enforcement is unacceptable."

Members of the committee hope to get beyond such vague assertions.

Hours after Trump's call to Pence, Ivanka Trump joined brother Donald Trump Jr., Rudy Giuliani and Kimberly Guilfoyle under a large tent at the rally to listen to Trump's speech.

She reportedly told aides she "decided to attend only because she had hoped to calm the president and help keep the event on an even keel."

After Trump's speech, as rioters began to smash through Capitol police barriers and break windows, the former president tweeted: "Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution ..."

That tweet, according to court testimony, only added to the anger fueling the mob.

Back in the White House, as staffers watched in shock at what was unfolding down Pennsylvania Avenue on television screens positioned throughout the West Wing, Trump's attention was so rapt that he hit rewind and watched certain moments again, according to Stephanie Grisham, a former White House press secretary.

"Look at all of the people fighting for me," Trump said, according to Grisham, who also served as chief of staff to first lady Melania Trump. At one point, the president was confused why staffers weren't as excited as he was watching the unrest unfold.

Kellogg testified that staff wanted the president to take immediate action to address the violence consuming the Capitol, but Trump refused.

"Is someone getting to potus? He has to tell protesters to dissipate. Someone is going to get killed," Alyssa Farah Griffin, a former White House communications official, texted Ben Williamson, an aide to White House chief of staff Mark Meadows.

"I've been trying for the last 30 minutes. Literally stormed in outer oval to get him to put out the first one. It's completely insane," Williamson wrote back.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., then called Ivanka Trump, pleading

that the president "ask people to leave."

"We're working on it," she replied. At that point, staffers acknowledged that despite efforts by Meadows, press secretary Kayleigh McEnany and Kellogg, the only person who could get through to him would be his daughter.

Ivanka Trump, according to testimony, went on to make at least two "tenacious" attempts to reason with her father as staffers were bombarded with messages from Trump allies begging him to quell the violence.

"Can he make a statement. I saw the tweet. Ask people to leave the (Capitol)," Fox News host Sean Hannity texted Meadows.

But inside the West Wing, Kellogg strongly recommended that they not ask the president to appear in the press room, where a group of reporters would be waiting for him. "Apparently, certain White House staff believed that a live unscripted press appearance by the President in the midst of the Capitol Hill violence could have made the situation worse," lawmakers wrote in their letter to Ivanka Trump.

The president ultimately agreed to a video statement. Multiple takes were filmed but not used. In each one of the initial takes, according to the committee, he failed to ask rioters to leave.

The final video was released on Twitter at 4:17 p.m. — nearly two hours after Trump's initial tweet criticizing Pence.

"This was a fraudulent election, but we can't play into the hands of these people," Trump said in the video. "We have to have peace. So go home. We love you; you're very special."

Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., the vice chair of the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection, has said it's hard to "imagine a more significant and more serious dereliction of duty" than Trump's failure to quell the riots.

Trump's last words that day came at 6:01 p.m. when he tweeted that the 2020 election was "unceremoniously and viciously stripped away from great patriots who have been badly and unfairly treated for so long."

He ended with, "Go home with love and in peace. Remember this day forever."

The committee has been aggressively interviewing witnesses — nearly 500 so far — and has subpoenaed Meadows and Trump's personal lawyer. They are asking Ivanka Trump to cooperate voluntarily. □

Jill Biden says bills aren't footballs to 'pass or pivot'

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Jill Biden went public Monday with her frustration over a political process that she says treats legislation like a football to "pass or pivot" while real people, such as her community college students, keep waiting for assistance that would help them build better futures. "Governing isn't a game. There are no teams to root for or against, just people, Americans from all walks of life who need help and hope," the first lady told a meeting of advocates for community colleges in a message that also seemed directed at members of Congress.

She was speaking about a proposal to make community colleges tuition free, promised during the 2020 presidential campaign but now dropped from a much larger social welfare and climate bill that was a core domestic priority for her husband, President Joe Biden.

Her pointed comments were unusual since first ladies generally try to avoid being drawn into the political fray or getting too involved in the legislative process. But the issue is deeply personal for Jill Biden, who has taught at community colleges for



First lady Jill Biden speaks at the Community College National Legislative Summit, Monday, Feb. 7, 2022, in Washington.

Associated Press

many years and is a long-time advocate of waiving tuition at these schools. She worked on the issue during the Obama administration, when her husband was vice president.

President Biden scrapped the tuition plan as he tried to win the support of key Senate Democrats who objected to the scope and cost of the overall measure, and whose votes he desperately needed given solid opposition from Republicans in a chamber split 50-50.

But the "Build Back Better" bill ended up stalled in the Senate anyway, and one of those Democrats, Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, recently declared that measure "dead."

On Monday, Jill Biden told the Association of Community College Trustees national legislative summit that the president will continue to push Congress to adopt the proposal.

"Joe doesn't quit. He doesn't give up. He is keeping his promise to rebuild our middle class and he

knows that community colleges do just that," the first lady said to applause.

Last year, Jill Biden, a veteran community college English and writing professor, addressed the organization with taped remarks, bowing to the COVID-19 pandemic, and promised that her dream of waiving some tuition would become reality with her husband in the White House.

"We have to get this done. And we have to do it now. That's why we're going to make sure that everyone

has access to free community college and training programs," she said in 2021. Speaking in person on Monday to a masked audience inside a hotel ballroom, she blamed failure to deliver on the "compromise" the president had to make.

The first lady, who teaches at Northern Virginia Community College, talked about having to lend a book to one of her students last week because he couldn't buy it before pay day, and about the student mom who eventually dropped out of class after her child got sick with COVID-19.

Both students would benefit from tuition-free college, child care support and other provisions of the stalled legislation.

"Build Back Better isn't just a piece of legislation and it's certainly not a football to pass or pivot," Jill Biden said.

The first lady, who grew up in Pennsylvania, opened with a few words about her love for sports and Philadelphia's pro teams, before she got to her point.

"I'm a first lady for all Americans, but when it comes to teams, my heart belongs to the Philadelphia Eagles, the 76ers, the Phillies, and the Flyers," she said. "The competition, the crowds, the rivalries, I love it all." □

Commerce Dept. adds 33 Chinese companies to red flag list

By ERIC TUCKER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is raising red flags about 33 Chinese companies whose legitimacy it cannot verify, imposing new restrictions on their ability to receive shipments from U.S. exporters and requiring extra diligence from American companies that want to do business with them.

The Commerce Department said Monday that it was adding the companies to what is known as the "Unverified List," a roster of businesses worldwide that are subjected to stricter export

control because U.S. officials have been unable to do customary checks.

"The ability to verify the legitimacy and reliability of foreign parties receiving U.S. exports through the timely completion of end-use checks is a core principle of our export control system," Matthew Axelrod, the department's assistant secretary for export enforcement, said in a statement. He added that the addition of 33 parties in the People's Republic of China to the Unverified List "will assist U.S. exporters in conducting due diligence and assessing transaction risk,

and signal to the PRC government the importance of their cooperation in scheduling end-use checks."

The announcement comes as Beijing occupies the world's attention by hosting the Winter Games. And it follows a speech last week from FBI Director Christopher Wray in which he said the bureau was opening investigations related to Chinese intelligence operations about every 12 hours and warned that there was "no country that presents a broader threat to our ideas, innovation and economic security than China."

The Commerce Depart-



The American and Chinese flags wave at Genting Snow Park ahead of the 2022 Winter Olympics, Feb. 2, 2022, in Zhangjiakou, China

Associated Press

ment's action puts U.S. exporters on notice that they will now need a license if they want to ship products to any of the companies on the list. It alerts the

flagged companies that they must certify that they are legitimate and willing to comply with U.S. regulations to continue receiving shipments. □

Governor ending New Jersey's school mask mandate

By MIKE CATALINI

Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — New Jersey's governor announced plans Monday to lift the statewide mask requirement in schools a month from now because of the rapid easing of COVID-19's omicron surge, calling the move "a huge step back to normalcy for our kids."

Individual school districts will be free to continue requiring masks once the state mandate ends March 7, Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy said.

New Jersey is one of a dozen states with mask mandates in schools, according to the nonpartisan National Academy for State Health Policy. New Jersey's has been in place since classes resumed in person in September 2020.

The state's decision comes as omicron wanes across the U.S. and state and local governments grapple with which COVID-19 restrictions to jettison and which ones to keep in place. It also comes amid a growing sense that the virus is going to be with us a long time and Americans need to find a way to coexist with it. Also on Monday, Delaware Gov. John Carney said his state's school mask mandate will stay in effect until March 31. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said she is re-



New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy talks to three and four year old students in a pre-K class at the Dr. Charles Smith Early Childhood Center, Sept. 16, 2021, in Palisades Park, N.J.

Associated Press

viewing the numbers and did not announce any change in the state's requirement.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said universal mask-wearing in schools "still remains our recommendation," but she did not fault states for dropping the requirement.

"It's always been up to school districts. That's always been our point of view and always been our policy from here," she said. Murphy cited the "dramatic decline in our COVID numbers" in announcing the rollback. The omicron vari-

ant fueled a spike in infections over the holidays, but cases in the state are down 50% and hospitalizations dropped off by one-third since last week, he said.

"We are not — and I've said this many times — going to manage COVID to zero," the governor said. "We have to learn how to live with COVID as we move from a pandemic to an endemic phase of this virus." Murphy faced pressure from Republicans and some parents who have held rallies at the statehouse demanding an end to the mandate. But the

governor has had support for the mask rule up to now from the New Jersey Education Association, the state's biggest teachers union. "This is a huge step back to normalcy for our kids," Murphy said.

In a statement, the union noted that trends show COVID-19 heading in the right direction, and added: "It is appropriate for Gov. Murphy to allow local districts to continue to require masking in communities where that is prudent based on local conditions." Nationwide, new COVID-19 cases per day have

plunged by more than a half-million since mid-January, when they hit a record-shattering peak of more than 800,000.

Cases have been declining in 47 states over the past two weeks, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Also, the number of Americans in the hospital with COVID-19 has fallen 24% since mid-January to about 111,000.

Deaths are still running high at more than 2,400 per day on average, the most since last winter, reflecting a lag between when victims become infected and when they die.

Omicron's loosening grip has raised hopes among politicians and public health experts that the pandemic may be about to enter a new phase in which the virus becomes like the flu — an ever-present but generally manageable threat.

In New Jersey, it is unclear how many and how soon the state's 600-plus school districts might end the wearing of masks.

Melissa Alfieri-Collins, a mother of two who disagrees with mask mandates in schools, saying she prefers "choice," called the governor's decision good news. But she raised concern that districts might keep mask rules in place. □



In this photo March 22, 2013, photo, the exterior of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) building in Washington.

Associated Press

By FATIMA HUSSEIN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The IRS said Monday it will suspend the use of facial recognition technology to au-

thenticate people who create online accounts after the practice was criticized by privacy advocates and lawmakers.

The agency said it would

IRS to end use of facial recognition to identify taxpayers

no longer use a third-party service, called ID.me, for facial recognition. Critics of the software said the database could become a target for cyberthreats. They also expressed concern about how the information could be used by other government agencies, among other concerns.

Earlier Monday, Senate Finance Committee Chair Ron Wyden, D-Ore., called on the agency to end its use of the ID.me software. After the IRS announced the practice would be suspended, Wyden said "the Treasury Department has

made the smart decision to direct the IRS to transition away from using the controversial ID.me verification service."

"No one should be forced to submit to facial recognition to access critical government services," he added.

The IRS is currently grappling with a worker shortage and an expanded workload from processing tax filings and administering pandemic-related programs. Legislation that would have given the agency billions of dollars to more expeditiously process returns is stalled.

"The IRS takes taxpayer privacy and security seriously, and we understand the concerns that have been raised," said IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig.

"Everyone should feel comfortable with how their personal information is secured, and we are quickly pursuing short-term options that do not involve facial recognition."

The agency said the transition would occur "over the coming weeks in order to prevent larger disruptions to taxpayers during filing season." □

Boris Johnson reboots office in bid to move past 'partygate'

By JILL LAWLESS

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Boris Johnson has brought in new senior staffers as he tries to restore his flagging authority including a communications chief who insisted the British prime minister is "not a total clown."

The prime minister hired Guto Harri, an aide from his days as London mayor who has recently been critical of Johnson, to try to regain control of the government's messaging after weeks of turmoil that have led some in the ruling Conservatives to call for his removal. He also appointed a senior Cabinet minister, Steve Barclay, as his new chief of staff.

Visiting a hospital cancer center Monday outside London, Johnson said he was "focused completely" on clearing a backlog of millions of medical procedures built up during the pandemic. It's one of a pile of critical issues, including a squeeze on household finances from inflation and a looming tax hike, that are being overshadowed by scandal over lockdown-breaching government parties.

"I think what people want



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson, right, and Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak, visit the Kent Oncology Centre at Maidstone Hospital in Maidstone, Kent, England, Monday, Feb. 7, 2022.

Associated Press

is for the government to focus, not on stuff going on at (the government district of) Westminster, but to focus on life ... beyond Westminster, and to focus on the needs of the country," Johnson said. "And that is what we're doing."

Johnson's grip on power has been shaken by public anger over revelations that his staff held "bring your own booze" office par-

ties, birthday celebrations and "wine time Fridays" in 2020 and 2021 while millions in Britain were barred from meeting with friends and family because of his government's COVID-19 restrictions.

A total of 16 parties have been investigated by a senior civil servant, Sue Gray, with a dozen of them also under investigation by the Metropolitan Police.

In an interim report last week into the four parties not under criminal investigation, Gray found that "failures of leadership and judgment" enabled events to occur that "should not have been allowed to take place" and described a Downing Street operation marked by excessive drinking and dysfunctional dynamics. Johnson apologized without admitting

personal wrongdoing and pledged to fix the problems in his office. But on Friday he was rocked by the departure of five senior staff, including his chief of staff, his communications director and his policy director, Munira Mirza. Mirza, a loyal longtime aide, stood by the prime minister amid the "partygate" revelations. But she said Johnson's "scurrilous accusation" this week that an opposition leader had failed to stop a notorious pedophile was the final straw.

Johnson responded to the departures with a Downing Street shakeup that included the eye-catching appointment of Harri, a former BBC journalist who worked for Johnson at City Hall from 2008 to 2012 but has more recently criticized him.

In 2018, Harri called Johnson "sexually incontinent," and in 2020 he said government communications during the pandemic had been "a masterclass in incompetence." Last month Harri said reports of parties in Downing Street while Britain was in lockdown were "unforgivable," though also "understandable in some ways." □

Belarus to send 200 troops to Syria alongside Russians

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Belarus plans to deploy up to 200 troops to Syria to serve alongside Russian forces in the country, according to a Russian government document released Monday, a move strongly condemned by Belarus' opposition leader.

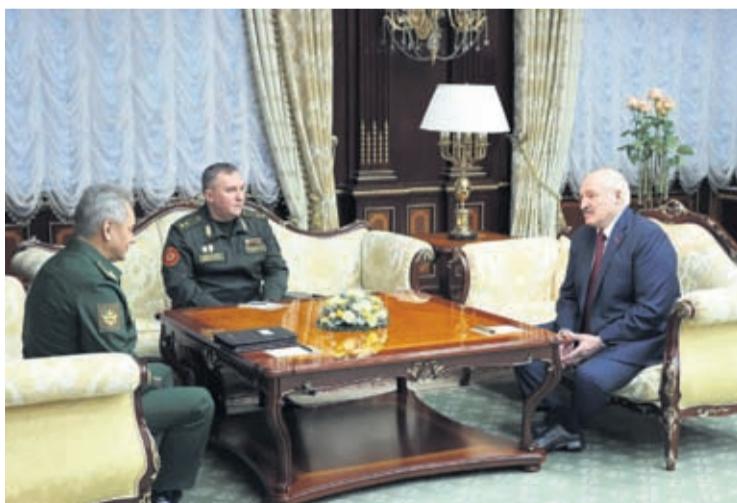
A draft agreement between Russia and its ally Belarus endorsed by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin says that the Belarusian troops will work to provide "humanitarian assistance" to the population outside combat zones.

The document, which is yet to be signed by the countries' foreign and defense ministries, states that Belarusian troops will act

under operational control of the Russian military in Syria when deployed to the country.

Russia has waged a military campaign in Syria since

2015, teaming up with Iran to help Syrian President Bashar Assad's government reclaim control over most of the country after a devastating civil war.



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, right, and Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin, center, attend meeting with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, left, in Minsk, Belarus, Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022.

Associated Press

The planned deployment of Belarusian troops to Syria reflects increasingly close defense ties between the two ex-Soviet neighbors and allies.

In recent weeks, Russia has moved troops from Siberia and the Far East to Belarus for sweeping joint drills. The deployment added to the Russian military buildup near Ukraine, fueling Western fears of a possible invasion.

Belarus' authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko, who has increasingly relied on the Kremlin's political and financial support amid bruising Western sanctions triggered by his crackdown on domestic protests, has called for closer defense ties with Moscow and recently offered to host Rus-

sian nuclear weapons. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the main opposition challenger to Lukashenko who was forced to leave the country after Lukashenko's re-election to a sixth term in an August 2020 vote that the opposition and the West saw as rigged, strongly criticized the deal for sending Belarusian troops to Syria.

She described the move as Lukashenko's payback for Moscow's support, arguing that it violates the country's constitution and runs contrary to the national interests.

"Lukashenko is paying with Belarus' sovereignty for the support he received in 2020 that helped him stay in power," Tsikhanouskaya told The Associated Press. □

Report: Israel police used spyware on Netanyahu's son, aides

By JOSEPH KRAUSS

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police allegedly used spyware on the phones of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's son and members of his inner circle, a local newspaper reported Monday.

Calcalist has published a series of recent reports alleging that police used sophisticated spyware against protesters and other Israeli citizens, prompting condemnation from across the political spectrum. The allegations could also undermine Netanyahu's ongoing corruption trial, after reports that police used spyware to surveil a key witness.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said the allegations, if true, are "very serious."

Public Security Minister Omer Barlev announced the formation of a government commission of inquiry, to be led by a retired judge, that will "investigate in depth the violation of civil rights and privacy in the



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, center, prays with his sons Avner Netanyahu, right, and Yair Netanyahu at the Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews can pray in Jerusalem's Old City, Jan. 22, 2013.

years in question." He said the alleged violations appear to have been carried out under former officials in previous governments.

Israel's previous police chief, Roni Alsheikh, who was in command during

much of the alleged snooping, has declined comment on the matter.

Calcalist says the police used spyware against a phone registered to Netanyahu's son, Avner, as well as two communications

advisors and the wife of another defendant in one of three corruption cases against the former leader. They are among several prominent figures to have been targeted with spyware, including business

Associated Press

leaders, former directors of Cabinet ministries and mayors, Calcalist reported. It said the organizers of demonstrations on behalf of disabled people and Israel's Ethiopian minority were also targeted.

The newspaper said police used the spyware to gather intelligence before any investigation had been opened and without judicial warrants. It's not clear whether Netanyahu's inner circle was targeted in connection with his ongoing corruption trial or for other reasons. A spokesman for the Netanyahu family did not respond to a request for comment.

Bennett, who replaced Netanyahu as prime minister last June, said Pegasus and other products "are important tools in the fight against terrorism and severe crime, but they were not intended to be used in phishing campaigns targeting the Israeli public or officials — which is why we need to understand exactly what happened," he said in a statement. □

UK rebukes China for supporting Argentina's Falklands claim

BEIJING (AP) — Britain on Monday firmly rejected a statement from China that affirmed Beijing's support for Argentina's claim to the Falkland Islands, as relations between London and Asia's leading power remain strained.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said in a tweet that the United Kingdom "completely" rejected "any questions over sovereignty of the Falklands."

"The Falklands are part of the British family and we will defend their right to self determination.

China must respect the Falklands' sovereignty," she wrote.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Argentine counterpart Alberto Fernandez issued a joint statement on Sunday that said China "reaffirms its support for Ar-

gentina's demand for the full exercise of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands," using the Argentine name for the territory. The two leaders met as Fernandez was in Beijing for the Winter Olympics.

Argentina believes the Falklands were illegally taken from it in 1833 and invaded the British colony in 1982. The United Kingdom sent troops and Argentina lost the two-month war for the South Atlantic archipelago in a conflict that claimed the lives of 649 Argentines and 255 British soldiers.

Argentina still claims the islands.

London says the Falklands are a self-governing entity under its protection.

Relations with China have already been strained on multiple fronts, including Britain's joining a U.S.-led

diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics to protest China's human rights record.

The joint statement also said Argentina "reaffirms its adherence to the one-China principle," a reference to China's claim to the self-governing island democracy of Taiwan.

"China and Argentina agree to carry on with close communication and coordination in international affairs, and safeguard the overall interests of the two countries and other developing countries," the statement said.

Xi and Fernandez also pledged closer economic cooperation and signed a memorandum of understanding on Argentina joining the "Belt and Road Initiative," Xi's signature project to build Chinese in-



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, and Argentina's President Alberto Fernandez pose for a photo before their bilateral meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Sunday, Feb. 6, 2022.

Associated Press

rastructure worldwide. China has overtaken Brazil as Argentina's main commercial partner, and if talks with Beijing remain on track, Argentina would become the first of the four major Latin American economies to join the initiative.

"Belt and Road Initiative integration won't be a paradigm shift but rather a continuation of broader trends of growing Argenti-

na-China engagement," said Pepe Zhang, director and fellow at the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center.

During his visit, Fernandez also laid a wreath at the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall, where the embalmed body of Mao Zedong, the communist revolutionary who founded the People's Republic, is displayed inside a crystal sarcophagus. □

U.S., EU raise alarm over alleged torture by Ugandan forces

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA

Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) —

The European Union and the United States are raising alarm over torture allegedly perpetrated by Uganda's security forces, with a prominent writer and government critic saying that he is a recent victim. The EU Delegation to Uganda in a statement Monday expressed concern over "a situation that for more than a year has seen a significant increase of reports of torture, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, harassment as well as attacks against human rights defenders, members of the opposition and environmental rights activists."

That statement followed a strong declaration Friday from the U.S. that cited "recurring credible accounts" of forced disappearances and torture by the security forces which "reflect poorly" on the government of President Yoweri Museveni, who has held power since 1986. Fresh criticism of Museveni's human rights record comes amid torture allegations by local writer Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, who charges that he was tortured for weeks while in detention before a magistrate ordered him freed late last month.



Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, who charges that he was tortured for weeks while in detention, appears before a court in a failed bid to have his passport returned so he could seek medical treatment abroad, at a court in Kampala, Uganda on Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022.

Associated Press

Rukirabashaija has posted photos that show many scars on his back, drawing anger from activists, opposition politicians and others who demand accountability. He lost his bid to retrieve his passport from the courts when a magistrate ruled on Monday that he had not proved an urgent need to travel. But the writer insists he needs to get better care abroad.

"They started using a pair of pliers and plucked flesh from my thighs and every-

where," he said in an account to the local Daily Monitor newspaper. "That day I thought I was dying and thought of denouncing my Ugandan citizenship." He said he was forced to stand before a camera and apologize to members of the first family.

Rukirabashaija's attorney believes his client was in the custody of the Special Forces Command, an army unit that protects the first family. The Special Forces Command has not com-

mented on allegations its members held the writer. Nor has it responded to the torture allegations.

Rukirabashaija is charged with offensive communication allegedly targeting Museveni and his son, Lt. Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, who commands Uganda's infantry forces.

In a series of tweets late last year, Rukirabashaija described Museveni as an election thief and Kainerugaba as an overweight and "intellectually bank-

rupt" soldier who hopes to succeed his father as president. Rukirabashaija, who writes satirical fiction, has been detained twice before over his work highlighting Museveni's failures. He was last year awarded the PEN Pinter Prize for an international writer of courage. His case has renewed focus on the alleged excesses of the security forces in enforcing Museveni's authority.

Opposition politician Bobi Wine, a popular singer who challenged Museveni in last year's elections, has seized on Rukirabashaija's troubles to urge the international community to hold Museveni's government accountable.

"The world cannot and must not watch on any longer," he said.

Museveni, once praised as part of a new generation of African leaders and a long-time U.S. security ally, still has support among many Ugandans for bringing relative stability to the country. He once criticized African leaders who refused to step aside but has since overseen the removal of term limits and an age limit on the presidency in Uganda. Uganda's elections are often marred by allegations of fraud and abuses by security forces. □

Mexican authorities evict Tijuana migrant camp near border

By JORGE LEBRIJA

Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico (AP) —

About a hundred members of the police, National Guard and army on Sunday evicted 381 migrants, mainly Central Americans and Mexicans, from a makeshift camp they had been staying in for almost a year in Tijuana at the U.S. border crossing.

The migrants' tents around El Chaparral crossing were demolished with the help of excavators and trucks while their inhabitants loaded their few belongings into bags and suitcases to be transferred to three local shelters.

"It was a relocation that had to be carried out carefully to avoid a collapse," Tijuana Mayor Montserrat Caballero Ramírez told reporters, saying the families were living in a state of "insecurity" for health reasons. Caballero Ramírez said the eviction was carried out peacefully and denied that the decision to take down the camp was in response to U.S. pressure.

"You know that Tijuana is governed by its own legal norms," she said.

The 381 migrants, made up of 86 families, 24 single mothers with children, 33 men and three members of the LGBT community,

were moved to the Migrant Integration Center shelter, the Salesian project and the Migrant Sanctuary, she said. "It's inhumane because they did it at dawn and the children were asleep," said Mexican migrant Guadalupe Omeca, who had lived in the camp for seven months with her three children, grandson and her partner.

The "El Chaparral" camp began forming at the end of January 2021, with the arrival of the Biden administration, after U.S. authorities began to limit the flow of migrants in compliance with policies that force migrants to wait in Mexico

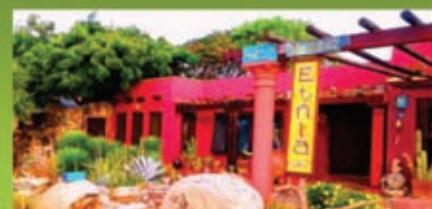
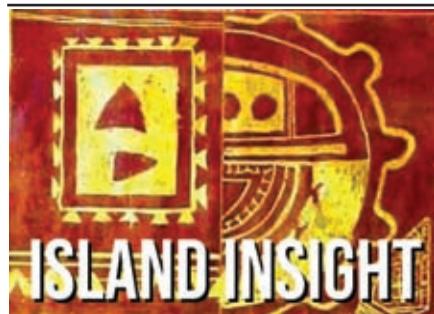


A makeshift migrant camp stands near El Chaparral pedestrian border bridge in Tijuana, Mexico, Thursday, July 1, 2021.

Associated Press

for their immigration court hearings as well as for pandemic health measures. Activists and humanitarian organizations had expressed concerns about the situation of the migrants, many of them chil-

dren, living in the makeshift camp. Last year, Mexico's National Human Rights Commission urged Mexican authorities to guarantee respect for the human rights of the migrants and to offer them protection. □



Article by Etnia Nativa

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Island's Native Snakes

In Aruba we have three species of snakes that are not found anywhere else in the world: they are the Rattlesnake or Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*) the Santanero (*Leptodeira bakeri*) and the Red worm snake (*Leptotyphlops arubrum*).

These three incredible species are directly related to ancestors from the South American mainland but years of isolation on our island has allowed them to develop unique characteristics in behavior and appearance. The continued existence of our native species depends on the constant effort for their conservation and the necessary protection against killing, collecting and all that exert direct threats to the authochrone ecosystem and survival it self as a whole .

The Rattlesnake is internationally recognized as one of the rarest snakes in the world and the native totem of agricultur, the protector and care taker of the land of harvest or "Cuidado di Cunuco".

The Rattlesnake is a relatively small pit viper averaging 70 cm in length. The body color of this venomous snake is usually fitting to its enviroment made out of tones of gray or light brown to light pink. faint brown, diamond-shaped markings on its back. Dimond shapes and coloration more visible on the back of juvenile specimens. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail that emits a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed or threatened.

Rattlesnakes are shy and non-aggressive. However, their venom can be dangerous and cause serious injury.

The Rattlesnake is a "foraging" snake. They are snakes that sit and wait for their prey. Normally you can find them waiting for prey under bushes, fruit trees and shaded plases. Praying on feed on lizards, mice, rats, birds, frogs bats and even on juvenile rabbits.

The distribution area of the Rattlesnake. Time ago they lived all over the island but nowad has been is restricted to the mountainous areas and surroundings of Arikok National Park.

If you see one, do not bother it, do not try to catch it, much less harm it, since it is a protected and endangered species.



Episode CXLI - 141



The Santanero or Aruba cat's eye snake, also known as a stinking snake becos of the feo smell that sticks to your hand when handled. Santaner or dweller of the grave yard , can be found all over Aruba. In times of rain it is common to find them near dams and even crossing roads at night.

Santanero is a slender snake and is approximately 50 cm long.

We can recognize this snake by the large scales on the top of its head and by its dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is white or cream in color and is smooth, without any markings.

They usaully remain hidden during the day time among plant leaves or under rocks. They are quite active at night when they are looking for their prey. They eat toads, frogs, insects and lizards. They often climb trees and cacti. The Santanero is shy and not aggressive at all when handeled. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its upper jaws that emit a mild venom that paralyzes its prey to be swallowed whole since the Santanero do not coil around or constrict its prey to soffocate and imobilize them. Although mildly venomous, the santanero rarely bites when handled, while its venom is not considered to dangerous to humans. Even though the old ways warns that its bite could make you suffer a dull persistent pain an aching of your bones for some days, specialy the long bones of arms and lengs.

The thiny Red worm snake, *Leptotyphlops arubrum*. *Leptotyphlops* hunts on



termites and ant eggs. They live mostly underground and are very cryptic, not much is known about their habits. These snakes can reproduces different pheromones which allows them to enter termite nests etc. The insects do not recognize the intruder because of the pheromone it mimics and so termites or ants do not sound the alarm for defence or attack. These snakes has also the ability to sent termite trails , which leads it to their nests.

For mor info about the thiny red worm snake check out our column Island Insight - Episode 37 "Get to know Aruba's small snake" □

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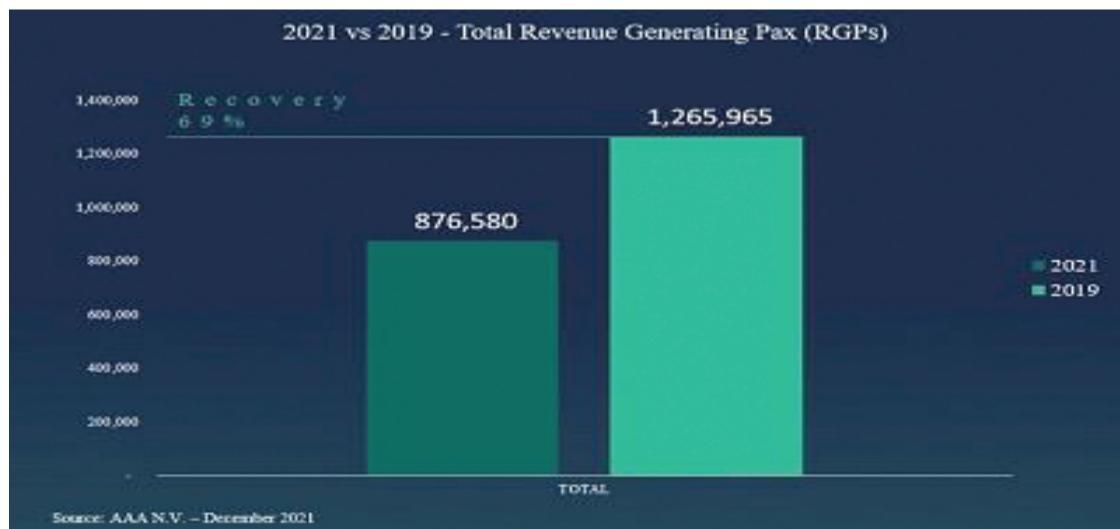
69% of 2019 departing passengers recovered in 2021

ORANJESTAD – Aruba Airport Authority N.V. (AAA) reports on Queen Beatrix International Airport's (AUA Airport) performance for December 2021.

December 2021 was another month with yet another satisfying recovery rate versus the same period in 2019. The total revenue-generating passengers (departing passengers) handled in 2021 represented a recovery of 69% versus 2019.

December 2021

In December 2021, AUA Airport handled 91,086 departing passengers. This was 7% more than the month before. During this month, AUA Airport recovered 86% of the amount of departing passengers handled in 2019 during that same month. In December 2021 67,011 passengers (pax) traveled to the US, 3,764 pax to Canada, 6,963 pax to Europe, 3,592 pax to the Netherlands Antilles, and 9,756 pax to Latin America.



During December 2021, AAA reported an average occupied outbound Passenger Load Factor (PLF) (number of seats of the total seats onboard an aircraft when departing from AUA Airport) for the US Market of 66%. The average PLF for all markets was 67% during that same period (compared to 2019 when they reached 85% PLF for all markets). During that month, AUA Airport averaged 34 flights per day, down from 37 daily flights during the same period in 2019. In that same period in 2020, AUA Airport only handled 659 flights, while Aruba's national border re-opened in July of 2020 for all commercial operations.

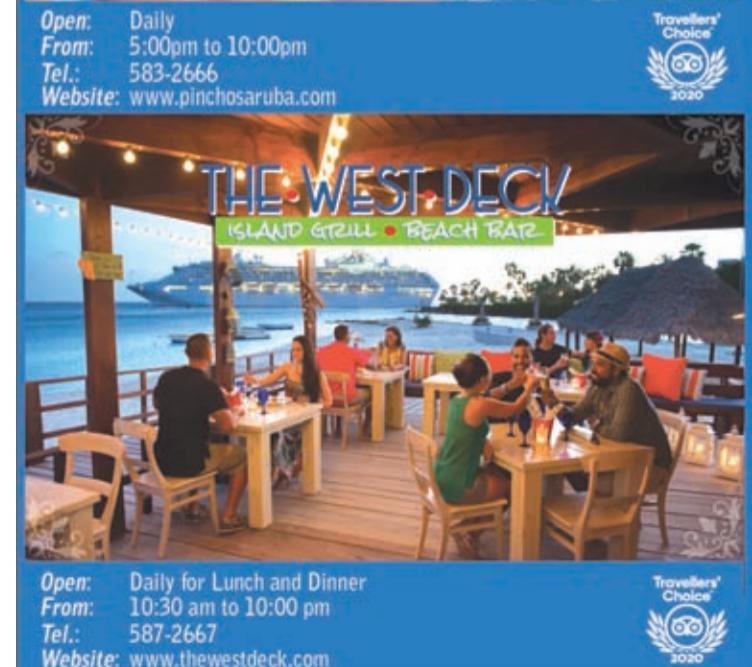
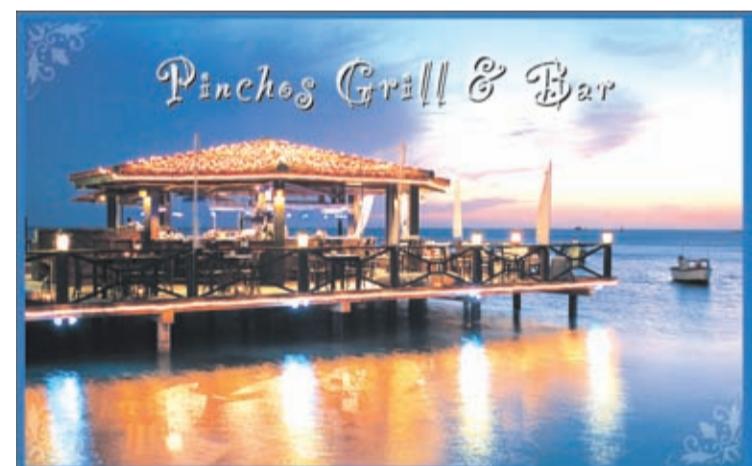
Full-year 2021

In 2020 AAA forecasted for 2021 a recovery of approximately 50% versus 2019. However, the past year was much better than expected. It ended up with a total recovery of 69% for 2021 compared to 2019. Compared to 2020, AUA Airport's revenue-generating passenger amount increased by 104%.

In 2021 AUA Airport handled 712,321 revenue-generating passengers departing to the US, 8,275 to Canada, 65,396 to Europe, 29,376 to the Netherlands Antilles, 60,919 to Latin America, and 293 to other markets. The markets that increased the most in 2021 compared to the previous year were the US Market with 117% and the European market with 103%. The Latin American market also showed robust growth with 97%, while the Dutch Antilles market grew by 44%.



Departing flights handled at AUA airport during 2021 totaled 9,512 flights, which entails an increase of 82% versus the year 2021. □



The history of Aruba

ORANJESTAD — Many of our visitors consider our One Happy Island as their home away from home, so we thought it is a good idea for you to know the history of Aruba. Here's our story in a nutshell.

What's in a name

Most probably, the name Aruba is of Indian origin, a combination of ora (shell) and oubao (island). But it might also be from Spanish: oro hubo (there was gold). The earliest mention on a map spells Orua.

The pre-Columbian era

Before the discovery of Aruba by the Spaniards, the island was inhabited by Indians, first by the Arawaks and later the Caribs. They lived of catching fish and collecting natural food.

The Spaniards, the Dutch and the English

Aruba was discovered by the Spaniards in 1499. In the 16th century, the Spaniards deported the entire Indian population and sent them away to the island of Hispaniola to work in copper mines. In the 17th century, the Dutch conquered the Windward islands. On Aruba horses and mainly goats were bred. Between 1806 and 1816, Aruba was occupied by the English.

Aloe, gold and phosphate

De aloe plant was particularly suitable for the soil and the climate of



Aruba. As of the 19th century, the juice is exported and since 1947 there is an aloe factory on Aruba. In 1824, gold was found on Aruba and phosphate in 1859. Both industries were the first important source of income for the Aruban people. De gold digging continued up to the First World War (1914) and the exploitation of phosphate was also halted in the beginning of the 20th century.

The Lago

The most important change in the past century for Aruba was the es-

tablishment of the Lago Oil and Transport Company. The founding of this refinery prompted the need of foreign labor and they came mainly from the English speaking islands in the Caribbean. They established themselves in San Nicolas. In 1986, the outdated Lago closed but the refinery was soon reopened by another oil company.

Aruba and World War II

Aruba was home to one of the biggest refineries in the world, supplying a substantial part of the fuel to the allied troops. That's why the



island was targeted by a German submarine. Fortunately, the attack was a major failure. Aruba had been spared massive damage

Striving for Separation

In the beginning of the thirties of the past century, Aruba officially announced to the Government of the Dutch Kingdom its wish to separate from Curaçao. Jan Hendrik (Henny) Eman and Shon A Eman were the advocates of 'Separación' (separation).

The struggle for 'Status Aparte'

In the course of the seventies, a movement came about that aimed to dissolve Aruba from the administrative unit of the Netherlands Antilles. After a couple of turbulent weeks in August 1977, the call for independence was recognized by the Dutch government, which resulted in obtaining the so-called 'Status Aparte': in 1986, Aruba became an independent country within the Dutch Kingdom.

Betico Croes

The young and dynamic politician Gilberto François ('Betico') Croes from Santa Cruz founded the political party Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo (MEP) in 1971. As leader of this party, he was an advocate of the realization of the 'Status Aparte' for Aruba in the seventies and eighties. He died in the year the Status Aparte took effect, 1986.

Tourism

In 1959, the first major resort on Palm Beach was constructed. Next to the Aruba Caribbean Hotel, other so-called High-rise hotels were built. Several smaller hotels were built as well, like those on Eagle Beach. Tourism has grown to become the major employer on the island, next to the refinery. Source: <http://www.historiadiaruba.aw/>. □



The most romantic money moves you can make

By KIMBERLY PALMER of NerdWallet

For some people, talking about money is as pleasurable a way to spend time together as going for a long walk on the beach.

"I am a money nerd, so to me, talking about money is super fun, and I've paired up with someone who is the same," says Kate Fries, a certified financial planner and financial advisor at The Family Firm in Bethesda, Maryland. "For us, talking about money is the same thing as talking about dreams. Where do we want to go, what do we want to build? It's a fun conversation."

But not everyone looks forward to money discussions. Finances can be a significant source of stress in a relationship. As Valentine's Day approaches, here are some ways to make talking about money with your partner more enjoyable or at least less painful — and possibly even romantic.

FIRST, CONSIDER YOUR OWN MONEY VALUES

Before initiating a conversation about money with your partner, Eugenie George, a financial wellness expert based in Philadelphia, suggests taking time to reflect on your own money values. In other words, what do you want to prioritize when it comes to spending and saving? Answers could include community, adventure and fun, she says.

"You need to figure out



In this June 27, 2018, file photo a couple is silhouetted against moonlight reflecting off the Missouri River as they watch the full moon rise beyond downtown buildings in Kansas City, Mo.

Associated Press

yourself first," George says.

SCHEDULE RECURRING 'MONEY DATES'

George suggests starting the money conversation with your partner by asking about their values, which allows you to find common ground even if those values aren't identical. "If your values aren't lining up, it doesn't mean it's a bad thing. You could be complementing each other," she says. In George's case, her partner prefers spending on family experiences, like a good meal, while she likes spending more on larger group activities, such as parties. Once they understood and accepted

their differences, she says it was easier to move forward and find shared goals, too. Fries suggests having a money date with your partner at least quarterly to check in and review recent spending patterns and goals. "Make sure everyone's tanks are full. You've slept and eaten, so you are coming with your best resources available. Maybe a cup of tea or a glass of wine and a candle, so you are associating positive things" with the ritual, Fries says.

PRACTICE EMPATHY

As those conversations progress, it's common to uncover conflicts or sources of

tension, says Ed Coombs, a CFP and couples therapist in Charlotte, North Carolina. "One way to avoid that is to acknowledge it. Say, 'Honey, money conversations have been difficult for us.'" Then, try to listen and open up the conversation with statements and questions that help you better understand where your partner is coming from.

For example, if you are concerned about your partner's spending patterns, you could start by saying, "I am feeling anxious and want to talk about our spending," Coombs says, instead of, "You're spending too much and

you're making me anxious." A similar approach can work when tackling difficult subjects such as paying off debt or making cuts in your budget.

"You see how hard you work for every dollar, but you don't see how your partner does. Try to extend them the same empathy that you give yourself, even if how they handle feeling sad or happy doesn't make sense to you," says Gaby Dunn, author and host of the podcast "Bad with Money."

FOCUS ON GOALS, THEN THE LOGISTICS

Fries suggests using your money dates to share your goals, making the conversation fun. "Oh, you want to go to Paris? How can we make that happen in the next two years?" Now that's an exciting conversation," she says.

It's also important to get a clear idea of your current financial situation, including an overview of your net worth, with how much you have in each account and how much you owe on any outstanding loans, Fries says. Then you can give yourself smaller tasks to complete before the next money date, such as making a budget or reviewing your retirement savings. Whether or not you commingle your finances, your actions still can affect the other person's money if you're sharing a home and other assets or debts. □

Biden task force releases report to strengthen labor unions

By JOSH BOAK
Associated Press

A Biden administration task force on organized labor on Monday issued a set of recommendations that could make it easier for federal workers and contractors to unionize.

The report submitted to President Joe Biden included 70 distinct policy proposals, according to a release by the White House. Biden created the task force chaired by Vice President Kamala Harris, with Labor

Secretary Marty Walsh as vice chair, through an executive order last April. The report argues that a decadeslong drop in union membership has coincided with a rising share of income going to the top 10% of earners.

It further says that most Americans have a favorable impression of unions and would join one if given the option in a vote. Yet the Labor Department reported last month that only 10.3% of workers belonged

to a union in 2021, down from 20.1% in 1983.

But the report also has stirred a backlash from many business groups that say union strikes and work stoppages could worsen economic challenges such as the supply chain squeeze and high inflation. "Today's report from the White House task force is nothing more than pro-union propaganda and exemplifies how entrenched pro-union allies are in this administration," said Kristen



President Joe Biden walks on the South Lawn of the White House after stepping off Marine One, Sunday, Feb. 6, 2022, in Washington.

Associated Press

Swearingen, chair of the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace, which is composed of more than 500 business groups including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the American Trucking Association. □

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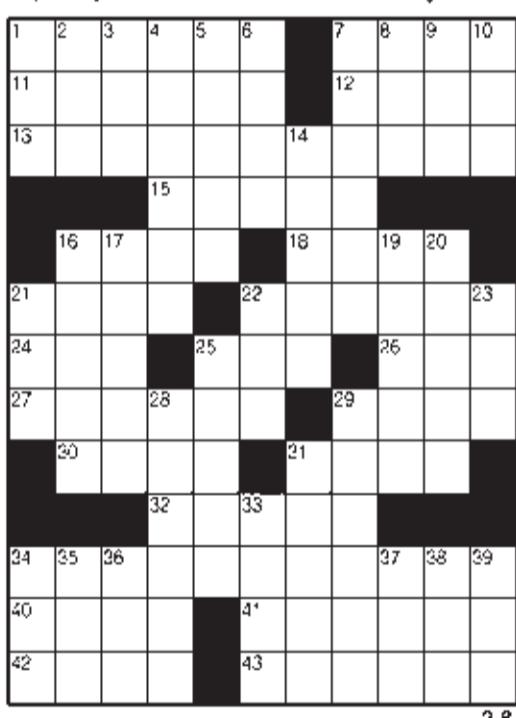
By THOMAS JOSEPH

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Yesterday's answer



2-8

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGEELIOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-8

CRYPTOQUOTE

PGVN LGSSL ZSQFIVQFZ LSFZ

KMX M ZFPSEL TVZVI IS

QME : X SJIG . EFTFO .

— MEEM HMQEZFSE

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: A MAN IS TOO APT TO FORGET THAT IN THIS WORLD, HE CANNOT HAVE EVERYTHING. A CHOICE IS ALL THAT IS LEFT. HARRY MATHEWS

Scientists race to gather winter data on warming Great Lakes

By JOHN FLESHER

AP Environmental Writer

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP)

— What's happening in the Great Lakes during those long, frigid months when they're often covered partially or completely with ice? A casual observer — and even experts — might be inclined to say, "Not much."

Lake scientists have long considered winter a season when aquatic activity slows. Most do their field studies at other times of year.

But researchers now think more is going on in the bitter depths than previously believed — including activity influenced by climate change. To learn more, teams will venture onto the frozen surfaces of all five lakes this month to collect water samples and other information from below the ice. "We've been ignoring winter on the Great Lakes for so long," said Ted Ozersky, a lake biologist with the University of Minnesota Duluth, who announced the "Winter Grab" expedition Thursday.

"There are lots of ways in which ice and winter conditions can affect the ecosystem. We don't fully understand all of them. We have a general idea of how it should work but in many cases we haven't done the footwork to see," Ozersky said.

Crews from more than a dozen U.S. and Canadian universities and government agencies will make their way onto frozen sections of lakes Erie, Huron, Michigan, Ontario and Superior during the week of Feb. 14. That's typically around the time of maxi-



Ice builds on Lake Michigan along the shore at Newport State Park in Wisconsin, Feb. 15, 2021.

Associated Press

mum ice cover. They'll take what Ozersky described as a midwinter "snapshot," measuring characteristics such as light levels at different depths, water movement and the presence of carbon, bacteria and nutrients that feed fish but also can damage the environment.

University of Michigan biogeochemist Casey Godwin will explore Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay, where phosphorus overloading has fueled harmful algae outbreaks that also plague Lake Erie. He and colleagues have gathered a lot of data from the bay, but almost none in winter, he said.

Although algae blooms are generally considered a summer problem, satellite imagery has detected them in Lake Erie's central basin during cold periods, Godwin said.

"I'm especially interested in what forms of phosphorus are present in the water during wintertime," he said. "We have ways of characterizing whether it's the type that can support the

food web or contribute to harmful blooms."

One reason for growing interest in winter's effects on the lakes is how winter itself is changing.

Great Lakes ice cover has declined steadily since the 1970s and some projections indicate it could become scarce later this century.

While that might boost the cargo shipping industry, the results for lake ecology are unknown.

Ice is "a dramatic physical force," Ozersky said, influencing everything from the exchange of carbon dioxide between air and water to light penetration and the water column's thermal structure. Such characteristics can determine how much plankton is available for fish.

Nearshore ice can protect fish eggs and prevent crashing waves from eroding shorelines.

"We know it's important but because we haven't studied it, there are many areas where we don't fully understand the effect of having or not having ice," Ozersky said.

The institute sponsored a 2019 meeting of specialists worried about the shortage of winter data as global warming boosts air temperatures, reduces ice cover and alters snow and rain patterns across the gigantic watershed that extends from Minnesota to the mouth of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec. □

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Spotify CEO says canceling Joe Rogan isn't 'the answer'

By TOM KRISHER and

LINDSEY BAHR

Associated Press

Joe Rogan has put Spotify in a tough spot, but the streaming giant is not ready to part ways with the popular podcast host despite intense criticism over his anti-coronavirus vaccine comments and use of racial slurs.

Spotify CEO Daniel Ek also said in a message to employees Sunday that Rogan's racist language was "incredibly hurtful" and that the host was behind the removal of dozens of episodes of "The Joe Rogan Experience."

"While I strongly condemn what Joe has said and I agree with his decision to remove past episodes from our platform, I realize some will want more," Ek said in the note. "And I want to make one point very clear — I do not believe that silencing Joe is the answer." The letter is the clearest indication yet of where Spotify stands on Rogan's fate with the company as some musicians, including Neil Young and India. Arie, have pulled their work from the streaming service in protest and others could follow. Spotify reportedly paid \$100 million to exclusively host Rogan's podcast, which now threatens the bottom line but is also a key part of the company's strategy to be a one-stop shop for audio.

"We should have clear



Spotify founder and CEO Daniel Ek poses for a photo in Stockholm, Sweden on June 18, 2009.

Associated Press

lines around content and take action when they are crossed, but canceling voices is a slippery slope. Looking at the issue more broadly, it's critical thinking and open debate that powers real and necessary progress," Ek wrote.

He said he was "deeply sorry" for the impact the controversy was having on Spotify's employees. Rogan apologized Saturday for his use of the N-word on some past episodes.

Spotify's move likely won't sit well with one side of an increasingly polarized country where there are heightened sensitivities on race and vaccine misinformation, experts say.

"If Spotify says, 'We can't

drop him. He has the right to say what he wants,' that continues on the line where there is this implicit support to say racist things on these platforms," Adia Harvey Wingfield, a sociology professor at Washington University in St. Louis, said before Ek's letter was released.

The streaming site also has to decide whether offensive words are allowable elsewhere on its app, where songs with racist, homophobic and anti-immigrant messages are available, said John Wihbey, a Northeastern University professor and specialist in emerging technologies.

"There's some real self-examination to be doing

beyond Joe," Wihbey said Sunday. "This is a big moment of reckoning for entertainment and streaming platforms to see where the window is, what's over the line."

In his letter, Ek announced an investment of \$100 million to license, develop and market "music and audio content from historically marginalized groups," without giving more details. Rogan's public troubles started on Jan. 24 when Young asked to have his music removed over concerns Rogan was promoting skepticism about the COVID-19 vaccines. Other artists followed suit, including Joni Mitchell and Roxane Gay.

Spotify said it would soon add a warning to all podcasts that discuss COVID-19, directing listeners to factual, up-to-date information from scientists and public health experts.

The scrutiny intensified when a video compilation emerged last week showing Rogan repeatedly using the N-word. Arie posted it on her Instagram account, using the hashtag #DeleteSpotify.

"They take this money that's built from streaming, and they pay this guy \$100 million, but they pay us like .003% of a penny," the Grammy winner wrote. "I don't want to generate money that pays that."

Rogan apologized in an Instagram video Saturday, saying that the slurs were the "most regretful and shameful thing" he has ever had to address and that he hasn't used the N-word in years.

Ek told The Wall Street Journal last week that he took responsibility for being "too slow to respond" to the criticism over vaccine misinformation. It took the company five days to respond publicly to Young.

"It's become clear to me that we have an obligation to do more to provide balance and access to widely accepted information from the medical and scientific communities guiding us through this unprecedented time," Ek continued in a statement. □



John de Mol from the Netherlands receives the Golden Rose Award 2004 in the category Honorary Golden Rose 2004 during the official award ceremony of the 44th Rose d'Or festival at the Culture and Congress Center (KKL) in Lucerne, Switzerland, Saturday, April 17, 2004.

Associated Press

Dutch police investigate abuse complaints at talent show

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Dutch police have received five reports of alleged criminal abuse linked to "The Voice of Holland" talent show and some 20 reports of "inappropriate behavior and possible sexually transgressive behavior" by people linked to the show.

The police statement on Monday revealed no further details of the complaints, citing privacy.

The online investigative show "BOOS" — the Dutch word for "angry" — reported last month that it had

received multiple claims ranging from an allegation of rape to sexually-tinted WhatsApp messages sent by two panelists on "The Voice of Holland" and its pianist and band leader. The show's former producer, media tycoon John de Mol, apologized and told "BOOS" that in his years as "The Voice of Holland's" producer he only received one complaint, and that was against the show's pianist and band leader Jeeroen Rietbergen, in 2019. Rietbergen was the partner of De Mol's sister, the

Dutch television star Linda de Mol. She ended their relationship and the popular talent show was taken off the air amid the allegations. Rietbergen apologized for his behavior. Two other panelists have denied wrongdoing.

Police said in a statement Monday that they are working with the country's Public Prosecution Service to investigate the reports and whether they merit opening criminal investigations. "This process takes time. We want to do this, as always, with the utmost

care in the interest of the victims," the force said. The reports of abuse at the ratings juggernaut that is broadcast in local versions around the world has reopened the #MeToo debate in the Netherlands.

Marc Overmars, a former star player with Ajax, Arsenal, Barcelona and the Netherlands' national team, apologized in a statement released by Ajax. He said that he "didn't realize that I was crossing the line with this, but that was made clear to me in recent days." □

Tom Hoge surges past Spieth at Pebble for 1st PGA Tour win

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (AP) — Jordan Spieth knew what to expect long before he ever saw Tom Hoge play golf.

Hoge had shown him how to play craps in 2015 during the John Deere Classic, and what Spieth took away from that evening was Hoge was not the kind of player who would back down when the stakes were high.

They were plenty high Sunday in the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am as Hoge, one of seven players who had at least a share of the lead in the final round, had another chance to win for the first time on the PGA Tour. At his side was Patrick Cantlay, the FedEx Cup champion and No. 4 player in the world. Two shots ahead of him with five holes to play was Spieth, a three-time major champion and former No. 1 player in the world.

Hoge delivered all the right shots. He made two tough birdie putts on the 11th and 14th to stay in the game. His 9-iron came inches from going in on the 16th. And then the 32-year-old from North Dakota made the biggest putt of his career, a 20-foot birdie on the par-3 17th that carried him to a 4-under 68 and a two-shot victory over Spieth.

"I waited 11 years for that," Hoge said, the crystal tro-



Tom Hoge poses with his trophy on the 18th green of the Pebble Beach Golf Links after winning the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am golf tournament in Pebble Beach, Calif., Sunday, Feb. 6, 2022.

Associated Press

phy at his side, still surprised enough to contemplate the win in his 203rd start on tour sends him to the Masters and moved him to No. 39 in the world ranking.

He called it "unexpected" for a couple of reasons. With a mad scramble at the start, he thought his double bogey from a bunker on the par-3 fifth might be too much to overcome. And when he realized he was still in the game, he still had Spieth to overtake.

"You always expect him to keep making birdies," Hoge said.

Spieth was expecting it, too, and was surprised he didn't win. The turning point

came at the 17th with an 8-iron Spieth thought was his best swing of the day. It came up short in the bunker, and he missed a 5-foot par putt.

Hoge saw the miss — he didn't know if it was for par or birdie. Only after he made birdie and realized he had a two-shot lead on the par-5 18th did he realize his time had come.

He had been a runner-up twice in his eight years on the PGA Tour, one other time missing a playoff at the Sony Open by one shot. That was the year Spieth first mentioned Hoge and said, "When he gets in contention, he will not

back down."

Such was the case on Sunday. "He's somebody that I knew when he was on the heels I needed to make birdies, he wasn't going to falter," Spieth said. "So between him and Patrick behind I never felt secure and therefore I tried to keep playing aggressively as well."

Hoge finished at 19-under 268 and earned \$1,566,000. He had only two seasons where he won more money, his biggest in 2020 with just over \$1.85 million.

Spieth looked like a winner when he birdied the 12th and 13th holes, and he reached the 15th tee with

a two-shot lead. Only after his bogey on the 17th did he learn he needed eagle to have any chance, and a sandy lie from under the tree in the fairway kept him from reaching the green. He made par for a 69.

Hoge had to wait for Beau Hossler, one of three players who shared the 54-hole lead, who needed eagle on the 18th to force a play-off. Hossler sent his fairway metal right into a bunker, blasted out long and three-putted for bogey for a 71 to finish alone in third.

Cantlay opened with two birdies and was still atop the leaderboard until a bogey at the eighth that left the final three hours wide open.

Cantlay didn't make another birdie until the 18th when it was too late. He spent most of the back nine scrambling for par and his luck finally ran out on the 15th and 16th hole. He shot 71 and tied for fourth along with Troy Merritt (67).

Joel Dahmen (72) and Andrew Putnam (73) also had a share of the lead during the final round. They were in the group that tied for sixth. Hoge hit the ball so pure on the back nine that he had a birdie putt from inside 20 feet on every hole until he got to the 17th, and that's where he made the biggest putt of his career.

"It's awesome," Hoge said. "I've worked through so many hard times." □

Nash says Nets not trading Harden before trade deadline

The Associated Press DENVER (AP) — James Harden is staying put with the Brooklyn Nets.

Coach Steve Nash gave a direct answer when asked before the team's game at Denver on Sunday if the team was definitely not trading the former MVP before Thursday's deadline.

"Yes, that's correct," Nash said. "I've talked to James, he wants to be here. He wants to be here long term as well, so I don't think

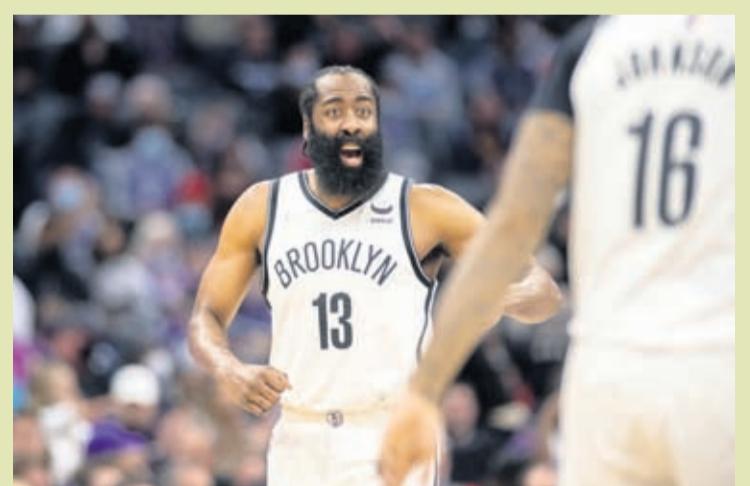
anything's changed other than noise from the outside. "James wants to be here, we're building with James and we think we have the best chance to win with James."

Harden has missed two games with a left hamstring injury and been the subject of trade rumors, including a possible deal to send him to Philadelphia for Ben Simmons. Nash said Harden's hamstring is tightness, not a strain, and he has lost strength in the liga-

ment. "For us, we just don't want to take any chances," Nash said. "We know last year we lost him for an extended period and we want to be conservative and make sure he resumes full strength so there isn't an extended absence."

Harden has missed 10 games in his first full season with Brooklyn.

The Nets entered Sunday's game having lost seven in a row, including a blowout loss at Utah on Friday night. □



Brooklyn Nets guard James Harden (13) yells to forward James Johnson (16) during the second half of the team's NBA basketball game against the Sacramento Kings in Sacramento, Calif., Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022.

Associated Press



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Herbert, Crosby send AFC to 41-35 win in Pro Bowl's return

By GREG BEACHAM

AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — From Darius Leonard's rambling pick-6 on the opening drive to Mac Jones' blissfully enthusiastic Griddy dance at the 2-minute warning, the Pro Bowl's Vegas debut was a messy, chaotic show. And Justin Herbert, Maxx Crosby and the AFC stars all won big.

Herbert hit Mark Andrews with two touchdown passes, leading the AFC to a 41-35 victory over the NFC on Sunday in the return of the Pro Bowl.

"I think it's a great opportunity to come out here and play some of the best football players this game has to offer," Herbert said. "What an opportunity to learn more about their game, understand them, get to know them and just have some fun."

Jones passed for 112 yards and threw a touchdown pass, and the New England rookie also did a memorable rendition of the Griddy in the first Las Vegas edition of the NFL's annual All-Star game, back from a one-year hiatus caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Herbert won the offensive MVP award after passing for 98 yards and finding the Baltimore tight end for two TDs in the first half of the Los Angeles Chargers star's first Pro Bowl appearance. Andrews had five catches for 82 yards.

Crosby, from the hometown Raiders, won the defensive MVP award with two sacks, three batted passes and three tackles for loss in a pleasingly slop-



NFC wide receiver Mike Evans (13), of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, catches a pass for a touchdown above AFC inside linebacker Denzel Perryman, lower right, of the Las Vegas Raiders, as AFC safety Tyrann Mathieu (32), of the Kansas City Chiefs, looks on during the first half of the Pro Bowl NFL football game, Sunday, Feb. 6, 2022, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

py game featuring seven interceptions, with at least one thrown by each of the six quarterbacks.

"I didn't want to injure or hurt anybody, but I still wanted to have some fun and work on my game," Crosby said. "No matter what it is, we're still in full pads and want to have a little bit of fun."

The AFC has won five consecutive Pro Bowls since the league returned to a conference format in the 2016-17 season. Its players took home \$80,000 apiece from Vegas, while the NFC got \$40,000.

Kyler Murray passed for 160 yards and three touchdowns for the NFC. The Arizona star made it close when he hit Minnesota's Dalvin Cook for a TD with 2:36 to play, trimming the AFC's lead to six points.

Jones then got stopped on a scramble in the waning minutes, but kept running about 55 more yards to the end zone and celebrated alone with the Griddy, pioneered by Minnesota's Justin Jefferson. After learning his celebration was premature, Jones hit Pittsburgh's Najee Harris for a first down on the next play to allow the AFC to run out the clock.

The Pro Bowl moved to Las Vegas for the first time after a four-year run in Orlando, and a less-than-capacity crowd at Allegiant Stadium mostly cheered for the Raiders and booed their AFC West rivals. Otherwise there was a decidedly mellow vibe on the field from the moment Leonard returned an interception 45 rambling yards for a TD.

Both teams treated the Pro Bowl with all the seriousness it deserves: Tackling to the ground was rare while both teams effectively played two-hand touch, and neither defense put up more than a perfunctory pass rush.

The informal rules to prevent excessive violence were also quite flexible: Tampa Bay's Antoine Winfield returned an interception 63 yards for a score to end the first quarter, but only after running through a pretty clear two-hand touch from Las Vegas' Hunter Renfrow. Renfrow got the day's biggest single cheer when he made a tip-toe TD grab in the back of the end zone.

CAN'T KICK IT

In another attempt at violence-reducing innovation, the Pro Bowl was

played with no kickoffs. The game started with the NFC offense on its own 15 in the so-called "spot and choose" method of eliminating dangerous kickoffs from football. The winner of the opening coin toss has the option to choose where to spot the ball on the field or whether to start the game with the ball.

Neither Pro Bowl punter got to play, either. AFC coach Mike Vrabel told Las Vegas' AJ Cole earlier in the week that the team wouldn't be punting — so Cole said he ate two hot dogs at half-time.

"I'm just here for moral support, basically," Cole said. "Just passing out water and high-fives."

WISH I WAS A BALLER

Tampa Bay's Mike Evans went up and over the Raiders' Denzel Perryman for a 19-yard TD catch in the first half. Perryman then went into the locker room at halftime and tweeted: "Lol i know i know, only if i was taller."

BROTHERS GOTTA HUG

Buffalo receiver Stefon Diggs got to go against his little brother, Dallas cornerback Trevon Diggs, for the first time as professionals. Stefon even switched to defensive back when Trevon came in as a receiver for the NFC in the first half, and Stefon got credit for a pass breakup in the end zone after a good bit of hand-fighting between the brothers.

Stefon called checkmate when he juked Trevon to the ground at the goal line on a TD run in the third quarter. □